

Introductions by orphan_account

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Summary:

A Will/Eleven friendship drabble that's made up of some headcanons, some speculation, some fic, borderline meta. Post-S02.

"They've never had a proper introduction, but they really didn't need one."

Introductions

Author's Note:

Honestly this is just rambling and angst because I want my children to be happy, damn it

Give me a Will/Eleven friendship.

Give me the party reconvening at the Byers' house after everything, all exhausted and tattered and dirty. Johnathon's practically carrying Will, and Eleven slumped into the couch, leaning on Mike's shoulder with a blanket wrapped around her. But the second the Byers boys cross through that front door, Will's eyes are open and he's looking at Eleven, who's looking back up, a trace of blood still crusted under her nose. And then Will's stumbling his way to the couch, and there are tears in his eyes as he pulls her into a quivering hug, mumbling "*Thank you, thank you, thank you,*" over and over into her shoulder, and his skin is still too-warm but his words are genuine. And El doesn't say anything, just hugs him back and nods slowly. They've never had a proper introduction, but they really didn't need one.

Give me Eleven noticing that Will seems tired a lot, frowning slightly as she watches him. When he notices her looking, she just frowns deeper, not understanding. "You are not sleeping?" she asks, and the worry in her voice is apparent. And Will looks away and mumbles something about *dreams*, weird dreams, and El cuts him off with a hand on his arm, because she gets weird dreams sometimes too. He brings his gaze to her, and she smiles a little sadly. "I understand," is all she says, but it seems to cure that nervous tension that was coiling in his shoulders, and that is enough.

Give me Will asking *how*—how she opened the gate, how the Upside Down even existed, how it was all connected, because it's taken so much of his life away and he barely understands a single thing about it. And El just goes sheet white, brown eyes wide and wavering as she shakes her head and softly replies, "No."

"No?" Will repeats, but the look in El's eyes *hurts*, and that bone-deep

ache he feels at her broken expression is enough to stop him from pushing farther. Mike's told him enough—about the lab, about El's abilities, the experiments. The small tattoo on the inside of her wrist, and what it meant. Eleven. So he doesn't push it. Just nods a little and says, "Okay."

A few days later, after everyone's recovered a little, the party once again assembles in the Wheeler's basement. This time it was lighter—no lingering threat hanging over their heads, no shadow monsters creeping around inside them. It was almost like how it used to be, before everything. And Dustin and Lucas were arguing over some game that El didn't understand, and Mike was jeering them on, and she took it as an opportunity to turn to Will while the others were distracted. And she ducks her head slightly, eyebrows drawing together as she admits, "It's my fault."

And Will frowns at her a little bit, confused, the ghost of a smile still curled on his lips from listening to his best friends bicker. "What?"

She nods slightly, catching his gaze. "It's my fault. I opened the gate. But I—" she hesitates, as if not knowing the words. "I didn't mean to."

The rest of the smile fades from Will's expression, but it's not in fear or in anger or in any of the things she dreaded. It was sad, and it was understanding, but it wasn't angry. "I know."

Still, Eleven dropped her gaze again. She could hide a little behind her mop of curly hair. "I'm sorry."

"You *saved* me," he reminded her, and when she looked back up, his eyebrows have risen. "Twice."

She shakes her head regardless. "My fault."

Will casts a glance at his friends, who were still too busy –wrestling, now—to notice their conversation. He looks back at Eleven, eyebrows still raised slightly, and sighs. "You wanna know what I remember most about being... *there*?"

El frowns a little. "The Upside Down?"

A nod. “Yeah. You know what part of that whole thing sticks out the most to me, in my head?” When El shakes her head slightly, Will leans closer to her, lowering his voice just a little. “When you got there. When you showed up and told me my mom was coming to help me. That’s what I remember most.” He leaned back, returning to his position but not raising his voice. “Not the—the Demagorgon, or the vines, or the cold, or anything else. You. Because that’s when I knew... things were gonna be okay. You helped them save me. You saved me. You have nothing to apologize for.”

Eleven’s wide eyes waver as she watches him. Her chin trembles a little, and claws her hand at her heart as she repeats herself, “*My fault,*” because she didn’t know how else to express the guilt clenching tightly in her chest.

“It’s not your fault,” Will assures her, and his voice is gentle but steady. “No one blames you, okay? No one. It’s not your fault.” He takes her hand, the one now clenched into a fist, and unfurls her fingers. She doesn’t flinch at his touch. “Okay?”

She watches her hand, and Will’s hand. His fingers lingered just above her tattoo, her *tag*, and her gut reaction was to retreat, to pull back. But the more prominent part of her mind was... oddly okay with it. She looked up at him again, and his eyes were honest and wide, and she nods slowly. “Okay.”

Give me Eleven and Will hanging out even more when Joyce and Hop start to date. Give me family dinners with the Byers and the Hoppers, with the two of them sitting across from each other at dinner and exchanging glances when one of the adults (or Johnathon, for that matter) says something uncool or overprotective. Give me Will teaching El how to set a table properly and do chores, flicking water and suds at each other while washing dishes. Give me Johnathon walking in and ruffling Will’s hair fondly, and ruffling El’s hair fondly, like the big brother he was.

Give me a jealous Mike, who starts to feel insecure and confused about what’s going on because El is spending almost as much time with Will as she does with him. Give me Will rolling his eyes at his best friend when confronted about it, clapping him on the shoulder despite the hostility in Mike’s expression and saying, “*Relax*, Mike.

She's like my sister. My... super-powered, badass sister. You have nothing to worry about. Besides—have you seen the way she looks at you?"

Give me El rolling her eyes at Mike when confronted about it, before taking his hands in her own cold ones and leaning her forehead to rest on his chest. "I like Will," she admits, and feels his fingers tighten around hers, hears his sharp inhale of breath. She continues despite this. "But not the way I like you." She looks up at him again, and something's softening in his expression, like some weight was lifted from him. Her eyes were honest "Do you understand?"

Mike nods a little at this. He doesn't feel insecure anymore. Not with the way El looks at him.

Give me Eleven and Will bonding over the terrible things they've experienced.

Give me Eleven and Will bonding over the nightmares, and the flashbacks.

Give me Eleven and Will bonding over the way Mike always asks them how they're doing, and genuinely cares.

Give me Eleven and Will taking care of each other, understanding each other, without really needing to explain everything.

Give me Eleven and Will playing, hanging out, picking on each other. Give me Will teasing Eleven about her cheeks going pink when Mike looks at her.

Give me Eleven and Will staying up, waiting on Joyce and Hopper to return from date night.

Give me Eleven and Will, two traumatized kids, finding comfort in each other and trust in their friendship.

Give me Eleven and Will, growing through their hardships and supporting each other like siblings would, blood and true.

Give me this beautiful friendship, because it has so many possibilities for growth and healing and joy, and *that's what these goddamn kids*

deserve.